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POPULAR TALES.

THE IRON SHROUD.

A TALE OF ITALY.

THE castle of the Prince of Tolfi was built on  
the summit of the towering and precipitous rock  
of Seylla, and commanded a magnificent view of  
Sicily in all its grandeur. Here, during the wars  
of the middle ages, when the fertile plains of Italy  
were devastated by hostile factions, those prisoners  
were confined, for whose ransom a costly  
price was demanded. Here, too, in a dungeon,  
excavated deep in the solid rock, the miserable  
victim was immured, whom revenge pursued,  
the dark, fierce and unquenching revenge of an Italian heart.

Vivenzio—the noble and the generous, the  
fearless in battle, and the pride of Naples in her  
sunny hours of peace—the young, the brave, the  
proud Vivenzio, fell beneath the subtle and re-  
morseless spirit. He was the prisoner of Tolfi,  
and languished in that rock-encircled dungeon,  
which stood alone, and whose portals never opened  
twice upon a living captive.

It had the semblance of a vast cage; for the  
roof & floor & sides were of iron, solidly wrought  
and spaciouly constructed. High above there  
ran a range of seven grated windows, guarded  
with massive bars of the metal, which admitted  
light and air. Save these, and the tall folding  
doors beneath them, which occupied the centre,  
no chink, or chasm, or projection, broke the  
smooth black surface of the walls. An iron bed-  
stead, littered with straw, stood in the corner;  
and beside it a vessel with water, and a coarse  
dish filled with coarser food.

Even the intrepid spirit of Vivenzio shrunk  
with dismay as he entered this abode, and heard  
the ponderous doors triple-locked by the silent  
ruffians who conducted him to it. Their silence  
seemed prophetic of his fate, of the living grave  
that had been prepared for him. His menaces  
and entreaties, his indignant appeals for justice,  
and his impatient questioning of their intentions,  
were alike vain. They listened, but spoke not.  
Fit ministers of a crime that should have no  
tongue.

How dismal was the sound of their retreating  
steps! And as their faint echoes died along the  
winding passages, a fearful presage grew within  
him, that never more the face, or voice, or tread  
of man would greet his senses. He had seen hu-  
man beings for the last time! And he had look-  
ed his last upon the bright sky, and upon the  
smiling earth, and upon a beautiful world he loved,  
and whose minion he had been! Here he  
was to end his life—a life he had just begun to  
revel in! And by what means? By secret poi-  
son? Or by murderous assault? No—for then it  
would have been needless to bring him thither.  
Famine perhaps—a thousand deaths in one! It  
was terrible to think of it—but it was yet more  
terrible to picture long, long years of captivity,  
in a solitude so appalling, a loneliness so dreary,  
that thought for want of fellowship, would lose  
itself in madness, or stagnate into idiocy.

He could not hope to escape, unless he had the  
power with his bare hands, of rending asunder the  
solid iron walls of his prison. He could not hope  
for liberty from the relentless mercies of his en-  
emy. His instant death, under any form of refined  
cruelty, was not the object of Tolfi, for he  
might have inflicted it, and had not. It was too  
evident, therefore, he was reserved for some pre-  
meditated scheme of subtle vengeance; and what  
vengeance could transcend in fiendish malice,  
either the slow death of famine, or the still slower  
one of solitary incarceration, till the last ling-  
ering spark of life expired, or till reason fled, and  
nothing should remain to perish but the brute  
functions of the body.

It was evening when Vivenzio entered his dun-  
geon, and the approaching shades of night wrapped  
it in total darkness, as he paced up and down  
revolving in his mind these horrible forebodings.  
No tolling bell from the castle or from any neigh-  
boring church or convent, struck his ears to tell  
how the hours passed. Frequently he would  
stop and listen for some sound that might betoken  
the vicinity of man; but the solitude of the desert,  
the silence of the tomb, are not so still and  
deep as the oppressive desolation by which  
he was encompassed. His heart sunk within him  
and he threw himself dejectedly upon his couch  
of straw. Here sleep gradually obliterated the  
consciousness of misery, and bland dreams waned  
his delighted spirit to scenes which were once  
glowing realities for him, in whose ravishing illu-  
sions he soon lost the remembrance that he was  
Tolfi's prisoner.

When he awoke, it was daylight, but how long  
he had slept he knew not. It might be early  
morning, or it might be sultry noon, for he could  
measure time by no other note of its progress  
than light and darkness. He had been so happy  
in his sleep, amid friends who loved him, and the  
sweeter endearments of those who loved him, his  
friends could not, that in the first moments of his  
waking, his startled mind seemed to admit the  
knowledge of his situation, as if it had burst upon  
him for the first time, fresh in all its appalling

horrors. He gazed round with an air of doubt  
and amazement, and took up a handful of the  
straw upon which he lay, as though he would  
ask himself what it meant. But memory, too  
faithful to her office, soon unveiled the mel-  
ancholy past, while reason, shuddering at the task,  
flashed before his eyes the tremendous future.  
The contrast overpowered him. He remained  
for some time lamenting, like a truth, the bright  
visions that had vanished, and recoiling from the  
present, which clung to him like a poisoned  
garment.

When he grew more calm he surveyed his  
gloomy dungeon. Alas! the stronger light of  
day only served to confirm what the gloomy in-  
distinctness of the preceding evening had par-  
tially disclosed, the utter impossibility to escape.  
As, however, his eyes wandered round and round,  
and from place to place, he noticed two circum-  
stances which excited his surprise and curiosity.  
The one, he thought might be fancy; but the  
other was positive. His pitcher of water, and the  
dish which contained his food, had been removed  
from his side while he slept, and now stood near  
the door. Were he even inclined to doubt this,  
by supposing he had mistaken the spot where he  
saw them over night, he could not, for the pitcher  
now in his dungeon was neither of the same  
form nor color as the other, while the food was  
changed for some of a better quality. He had  
been visited, therefore, during the night. But  
how had the person obtained entrance? Could  
he have slept so soundly, that the unlocking and  
opening of those ponderous portals were effected  
without waking him? He would have said this  
was not possible, but that in doing so, he must  
admit a greater difficulty, an entrance by other  
means, of which he was convinced there existed  
none. It was not intended then, that he should  
be left to perish from hunger. But the secret  
and mysterious mode of supplying him with food,  
seemed to indicate he was to have no opportu-  
nity of communicating with a human being.

The other circumstance which had attracted  
his notice, was the disappearance, as he believed,  
of one of the seven grated windows that ran along  
the top of his prison. He felt confident that he  
had observed and counted them; for he was  
rather surprised at their number, and there was  
something peculiar in their form, as well as in  
the manner of their arrangement, at equal dis-  
tances. It was so much easier, to suppose he  
was mistaken, than that a portion of the solid  
iron, which formed the walls, could have escaped  
from its position, that he soon dismissed the  
thought from his mind.

Vivenzio partook of the food that was before  
him, without apprehension. It might be poison-  
ed; but if it were, he knew he could not escape  
death, should such be the design of Tolfi; and  
the quickest death would be the speediest re-  
lease.

The day passed wearily and gloomily; though  
not without a faint hope that, by keeping watch  
at night, he might observe when the person came  
again to bring him food, which he supposed, he  
would do in the same way as before. The mere  
thought of being approached by a living crea-  
ture, and the opportunity it would present of  
learning the doom prepared, or preparing for him,  
imparted some comfort. Besides, if he came  
alone, might he not in a furious onset overpower  
him? Or he might be accessible to pity, or the  
influence of such munificent rewards as he could  
bestow, if once more at liberty and master of  
himself. Say he was armed, the worst that could  
befall, if no bribes, nor prayers, nor force pre-  
vailed was a faithful blow, which though dealt in  
a damned cause, might work a desired end.  
There was no chance so desperate, but it looked  
lovely in Vivenzio's eyes, compared with the idea  
of being totally abandoned.

The night came—Vivenzio watched. Morn-  
ing came, and Vivenzio was confounded! He  
must have slumbered without knowing it. Sleep  
must have stolen over him when exhausted by fa-  
tigue, and in that interval of feverish repose, he  
had been baffled; for there stood his replenished  
pitcher of water, and there his day's meal! Nor  
was that all. Casting his looks towards the win-  
dows of his dungeon, he counted but five! Here  
was no deception, and he was now convinced  
there had been none the day before. But what  
did all this portend? Into what strange and mys-  
terious den had he been cast? He gazed till  
his eyes ached; he could discover nothing to  
explain the mystery. That it was so, he knew.  
Why it was so, he racked his imagination in vain  
to conjecture. He examined the doors. A single  
circumstance convinced him they had not  
been opened.

A wisp of straw, which he had carelessly  
thrown against them the preceding day, as he  
passed to and fro, remained where he had cast it,  
though it must have been displaced by the slight-  
est motion of the doors. This was evidence that  
could not be disputed; and it followed that there  
must be some secret machinery in the walls by  
which a person could enter. He inspected them  
closely. They appeared to him one solid and  
compact mass of iron; or joined, if joined they  
were, with such nice art that no mark of divi-  
sion was perceptible. Again and again he sur-  
veyed them—and the floor—and the roof—and  
the range of the visionary windows, as he  
was now almost tempted to consider them; he  
could discover nothing to relieve his doubts, or  
satisfy his curiosity. Sometimes he fancied that  
altogether the dungeon had a more contracted  
appearance—that it looked smaller; but this he  
ascribed to fancy, and the impression naturally  
produced upon his mind by the undeniable dis-  
appearance of two of the windows.

With intense anxiety, Vivenzio looked for-  
ward to the return of night; and as it approach-  
ed, he resolved that treacherous sleep should not  
again betray him. Instead of seeking his bed of

straw, he continued to walk up and down his  
dungeon till daylight, straining his eyes in every  
direction through the darkness, to watch for any  
appearance that might explain these mysteries.  
While thus engaged, and as near as he could  
judge, (by the time that afterwards elapsed before  
the morning came in) about two o'clock, there  
was a slight tremulous motion of the floor. He  
stopped. The motion lasted nearly a minute;  
but it was so extremely gentle, that he almost  
doubted whether it was real or imaginary. He  
listened. Not a sound could be heard. Pres-  
ently, however, he felt a rush of cold air blow  
upon him; and dashing towards the quarter  
whence it seemed to proceed, he stumbled over  
something which he judged to be the water ewer.  
The rush of cold air was no longer perceptible;  
—and as Vivenzio stretched out his hands he  
found himself close to the walls. He remained  
motionless for a considerable time; but nothing  
excited during the remainder of the night to  
occupy his attention, though he continued to watch  
with unabated vigilance.

The first approaches of the morning were visi-  
ble through the grated windows, breaking, with  
faint divisions of light, the darkness that still per-  
vaded every other part, long before Vivenzio was  
enabled to distinguish any object in his dungeon.  
Instinctively and fearfully he turned his eyes;  
hot and inflamed with watching, towards them.  
There were none! He could see only four; but  
it might be that some intervening object prevent-  
ed the fifth from becoming perceptible; and he  
waited impatiently to ascertain if it were so. As  
the light strengthened, however, and penetrated  
every corner of the cell, other objects of amaze-  
ment struck his sight. On the ground lay the  
broken fragments of the pitcher he had used the  
day before, and at a small distance from them,  
nearer to the wall, stood the one he had used the  
first night. It was filled with water, and beside  
it was his food. He was now certain, that, by  
some mechanical contrivance, an opening was  
obtained through the iron wall and that through  
this opening the current of air had found en-  
trance. But how noiseless! For had a feather  
almost waved at the time, he must have heard it.  
Again he examined that part of the wall, but both  
to sight and touch it appeared one even and uni-  
form surface, while to repeated and violent blows,  
there was no reverberating sound indicative of  
hollowness.

This perplexing mystery had for a time with-  
drawn his thoughts from the windows; but now,  
directing his eyes again towards them, he saw that  
the fifth had disappeared in the same manner as  
the preceding two, without the least distinguish-  
able alteration of external appearances. The re-  
maining four looked as the seven had originally  
looked; that is, occupying at irregular distances,  
the top of the wall on that side of the dungeon.  
The tall, folding door too, seemed to stand be-  
neath, in the centre of these four, as it had at first  
stood in the centre of the seven. But he could  
no longer doubt, what on the preceding day, he  
fancied might be the effect of visual deception.  
The dungeon was smaller—the roof had lowered  
—and the opposite ends had contracted the im-  
mediate distance by a space equal, he thought,  
to that over which the three windows had extend-  
ed. He was bewildered in vain imaginings to  
account for these things. Some frightful purpose  
—some devilish torture of mind and body—some  
unheard-of device for producing exquisite mis-  
ery, lurked he was sure, in what had taken place.

Oppressed with this belief, and distracted more  
by the uncertainty of whatever fate impended,  
than he could be dismayed, he thought by the  
knowledge of the worst, he sat ruminating, hour  
after hour, yielding his fears in succession to ev-  
ery haggard fancy. At last a horrible suspicion  
suddenly flashed across his mind, and he started  
up with a frantic air. 'Yes!' he exclaimed,  
looking wildly around his dungeon, and shudder-  
ing as he spoke—'Yes! it must be so—I see it!  
I feel the maddening truth like scorching  
flames upon my brain! Eternal God!—support  
me! It must be so—Yes, yes, that is to be my  
fate! You roof will descend! these walls will  
move round—and slowly, slowly, crush me in  
their iron arms! Lord God! look down upon  
me, and in mercy strike me with instant death!  
Oh, fiend—oh, devil—Is this your revenge.

He dashed himself upon the ground in agony;  
—tears burst from him, and the sweat stood in  
large drops upon his face—he sobbed aloud—  
he tore his hair—he rolled about like one suffer-  
ing intolerable anguish of body, and would have  
bitten the iron floor beneath him; he breathed  
fearful curses upon Tolfi, and the next moment  
passionate prayers to heaven for immediate death.  
Then the violence of his grief became exhausted,  
and he lay still, weeping as a child would weep.  
The twilight of departing day shed its gloom a-  
round him ere he arose from that posture of ut-  
ter and hopeless sorrow. He had taken no food.  
Not one drop of water had cooled the fever of his  
 parched lips. Sleep had not visited his eyes for  
six and thirty hours. He was faint with hunger;  
weary with watching, and with the excess of his  
emotions. He tasted of his food; he drank with  
avidity of the water; and feeling like a drunken  
man to his straw, cast himself upon it to brood  
again over the appalling image that fastened it  
self upon his almost frenzied thoughts.

He slept. But his slumbers were not tranquil.  
He resisted, as long as he could, their approach,  
and when at last, enfeebled nature yielded to  
their influence, he found no oblivion from his  
cares. Terrible dreams haunted him—gastly vi-  
sions harrowed up his imagination—he shouted  
and screamed, as if he already felt the dungeon's  
ponderous roof descending on him—he breathed  
hard and thick, as though writhing between its  
iron walls. Then would he spring up—start  
wildly about him—stretch forth his hands to  
sure he had space enough to live—and muttering

some incoherent words, sink down again, to pass  
through the same fierce vicissitudes of delirious  
sleep.

The morning of the fourth day dawned upon  
Vivenzio. But it was high noon before his mind  
shook off its stupor, or he awoke to a full con-  
sciousness of his situation. And what a fixed  
energy of despair sat upon his pale features, as  
he cast his eyes upwards, and gazed upon the  
three windows that now alone remained! The  
three—there was no more! and they seemed to  
number his allotted days. Slowly and calmly he  
next surveyed the top and sides, and comprehend-  
ed the meaning of the diminishing height of  
the former, as well as the gradual approximation  
of the latter. The contracted dimensions of his  
prison were now to gross and palpable to be the  
juggle of his heated imagination. Still lost in  
wonder at the means, Vivenzio could put no  
cheat upon his reason, as to the end. By what  
horrible ingenuity it was contrived, that walls and  
roof, and windows, should thus silently and im-  
perceptibly, without noise, and without motion  
almost, fold as it were, within each other, he  
knew not. It only did so: and he vainly strove  
to persuade himself that it was the intention of  
the contriver to rack the miserable wretch who  
might be immured there, with anticipation, mere-  
ly of a fate, from which in the very crisis of his  
agony, he was to be relieved.

Gladly would he have clung even to this pos-  
sibility, if his heart would have let him; but he  
felt a dreadful assurance of its fallacy. And what  
matchless inhumanity it was to doom the  
sufferer to such lingering torments—to lead him  
day by day to so appalling a death, unsupported  
by the consolations of religion, unvisited by any  
human being, abandoned to himself, deserted of  
all, and denied even the sad privilege of knowing  
that his cruel destiny would awaken pity! Al-  
one he was to perish!—alone he was to await a  
slow coming torture, whose most exquisite pang  
would be inflicted by that very solitary and that  
tardy coming!

'It is not death I fear,' he exclaimed, 'but the  
death I must prepare for! Methinks, too, I  
could meet even that—all horrible and revolting  
as it is, if it might overtake me now. But where  
shall I find fortitude to carry till it comes! How  
can I outlive the three long days and nights I  
have to live. There is no power within me to  
bid the hideous spectre hence—none to make it  
familiar to my thoughts; or myself patient of its  
errand. My thoughts, rather, will flee from me,  
and I grow mad in looking at it. Oh! for a  
deep sleep to fall upon me! That so in death's  
likeless I might embrace death itself, and drink  
no more of the cup that is presented to me, than  
my fainting spirit has already tasted!

In the midst of these lamentations, Vivenzio  
noticed that his accustomed meal, with the pitch-  
er of water, had been conveyed as before, into  
his dungeon. But this circumstance no longer  
excited his surprise. His mind was overwhelm-  
ed with many others of far greater magnitude.  
It suggested, however, a feeble hope of deliver-  
ance; and there is no hope so feeble, as to yield  
some support to a heart bending under despair.  
He resolved to watch, during the ensuing night,  
for the signs he had before observed! and should  
he again feel the gentle and tremulous motion of  
the floor, or the current of air, to seize that mo-  
ment for giving audible expression of his misery.  
Some person must be near him, and within the  
reach of his voice, at the instant when his mis-  
ery was supplied; some one, perhaps, susceptible  
of pity. Or if not, to be told even that his  
apprehensions were just, and that his fate was to  
be what he foreboded, would be preferable to a  
suspense which hung upon the possibility of his  
worst fears being visionary.

The night came; and as the hour approached  
when Vivenzio imagined he might expect the  
signs, he stood fixed and silent as a statue.  
He feared to breathe, almost, lest he should lose  
any sound which would warn him of their com-  
ing. While thus listening with every faculty of  
mind and body strained to, an agony of atten-  
tion, it occurred to him he should be more sensi-  
ble probably, if he stretched himself on the iron  
floor. He accordingly laid himself softly down,  
and had not been long in that position when—  
yes—he was certain of it—the floor moved under  
him! He sprang up, and in a voice suffocated  
nearly with emotion, called aloud. He paused,  
—the motion ceased—he felt no stream of air—  
all hushed—no voice answered to his— he burst  
into tears; and as he sunk to the ground, in re-  
newed anguish, exclaimed—'Oh, my God! my  
God! You alone have power to save me now,  
or strengthen me for the trial you permit!'

Another morning dawned upon the wretched  
captive, and the fatal index of his doom met his  
eyes. Two windows!—and two days!—and all  
would be over! Fresh food—fresh water!—  
The mysterious visit had been paid, though he  
had implored it in vain. But how awfully was  
his prayer answered in what he now saw! The  
roof of the dungeon was within a foot of his head.  
The two ends were so near, that in six paces he  
trod the distance between them. Vivenzio shud-  
dered as he gazed, as his steps traversed the nar-  
row area. But his feelings no longer rent  
themselves in frantic wallings. With folded arms  
and clenched teeth, with eyes that were blood  
shot from much watching, and fixed with a hard  
quick breathing, and a hurried walk, he strode  
backwards and forwards in silent musings for  
several hours. What mind shall conceive, what  
tongue utter, or what pen describe the dark and  
terrible character of his thoughts! Like the  
fate that moulded them, they had no similitude  
in the wild range of the world's agony for man.  
Suddenly he stopped, and his eye was riveted up-  
on that part of the wall which was over his bed  
of straw. Words are inscribed here! A human  
language traced by a human hand! He rushed

towards them: but his blood freezes as he reads:

'J. Ludovico Sforza, tempted by the gold of  
the Prince Tolfi, spent three years in contriving  
and executing this accursed triumph of my art.  
When it was completed, the perfidious Tolfi,  
more devil than man, who conducted me hither  
one morning, to be witness, as he said, of its per-  
fection, doomed me to be the first victim of my  
own perfidious skill;—lest as he declared, I  
should divulge the secret, or repeat the effort of  
my ingenuity. May God pardon him, as I hope  
he will me, that ministered to his unhallowed  
purpose! Miserable wretch whose thou art,  
that readest these lines, fall on thy knees, and in-  
voke as I have done, His sustaining mercy, who  
can alone nerve thee to meet the vengeance of  
Tolfi, armed with his tremendous engine, which  
in a few hours must crush you, as it will the  
needy wretch who made it.'

A deep groan burst from Vivenzio. He stood,  
like one transfixed, with dilated eyes, expanded  
nostrils, and quivering lips, gazing at the fatal  
inscription. It was as if a voice from the sepul-  
chre had sounded in his ears, 'Prepare!' Hope  
forsook him. There was his sentence, recorded  
in those dismal words. The future stood unveil-  
ed before him, ghastly and appalling. His brain  
already feels the descending horror,—his bones  
seem to crack and crumble in the mighty walls!  
Unknown what it is he does, he fumbles in his  
garment for some weapon of self destruction.—  
He clenches his throat in his convulsive gripe,  
as though he would strangle himself at once.—  
He stares upon the walls, and his warring spirit  
demands, 'Will they not anticipate their office  
if I dash my head against them?' An hysterical  
laugh chokes him as he exclaims, 'why should  
I? He was but a man who died first in their  
fierce embrace; and I should be less than man  
not to do as much!'

The evening sun was descending, and Viven-  
zio beheld his golden beams streaming through  
one of the windows. What a thrill of joy shot  
through his soul at the sight! It was a pre-  
cious link, that united him for a moment with  
the world beyond. There was ecstasy in the  
thought. As he gazed, long and earnestly, it  
seemed as if the windows had lowered sufficient-  
ly for him to reach them. With one bound he  
was beneath them—with one wild spring he clung  
to the bars. Whether it was so contrived, pur-  
posely to madden with delight the wretch who  
looked, he knew not; but at the extremity of a  
long vista, cut through the solid rocks, the ocean;  
the sky, the setting sun, olive groves, shady  
walks, and in the farthest distance, delicious  
glimpses of magnificent Sicily, burst upon his  
sight. How exquisite was the cool breeze as it  
swept across his cheek, loaded with fragrance!  
He inhaled it as though it were the breath of  
continued life. And there was a freshness in  
the landscape, and in the rippling of the cal-  
green sea, that fell upon his writhing heart like  
the dew upon the parched earth. How he gazed  
and panted, and still clung to his hold! Some-  
times hanging by one hand and sometimes by the  
other, and then grasping the bars with both, as  
if loth to quit the smiling paradise out-stretch-  
ing before him; till exhausted, and his hands swollen  
and benumbed, he dropped helpless down, and  
lay stunned for a considerable time by the fall.

When he recovered, the glorious vision had  
vanished. He was in darkness. He doubted  
whether it was not a dream that had passed be-  
fore his sleeping fancy; but gradually his scat-  
tered thoughts returned, and with them came re-  
membrance. Yes! he looked once again upon  
the gorgeous splendor of nature! Once again  
his eyes had rambled beneath their veiled lids, at  
the sun's radiance, and sought repose in the soft  
verdure of the olive tree, or the gentle swell of  
undulating leaves. Oh, that he was a mariner,  
exposed upon those waves to the worst fury of  
the storm and tempest, or a very wretch, loath-  
some with disease, plague-stricken, and his body  
one leprous contagion from crown to sole, hunt-  
ed forth to gasp out the remnant of infectious  
life beneath those verdant trees, so he might shun  
the destiny upon which he tottered!

Vain thoughts would steal over his mind from  
time to time, in spite of himself; but it scarcely  
moved it from the stupor into which it had sunk,  
and which had kept him during the night, like  
one who had been drugged with opium. He was  
equally insensible to the calls of hunger and  
thirst, though the third day was now commencing  
since even a drop of water had passed his  
lips. He remained on the ground sometimes  
sitting, sometimes lying; at intervals, sleeping  
heavily; and when not sleeping, silently brood-  
ing over what was to come, or talking aloud, in  
disordered speech, of his wrongs, of his friends,  
of his home, and of those he loved, with a con-  
fused mingling of all.

In this pitiable condition, the sixth and last  
morning dawned upon Vivenzio, if dawn it might  
be called—the dim obscure light which faintly  
struggled through the one solitary window of  
his dungeon. He could hardly be said to notice  
the melancholy token. And yet he did notice it;  
for as he raised his eyes and saw the portentous  
sign, there was a slight convulsive distortion of  
the countenance. But what did attract his no-  
tice and at the sight of which his agitation was  
excessive, was the change his iron bed had un-  
dergone. It was a bed no longer. It stood be-  
fore him the visible semblance of a funeral couch  
or bier! When he beheld this, he started from  
the ground; and, in raising himself, suddenly  
struck his head against the roof, which was now  
so low that he could no longer stand upright.—  
'God's will be done!' was all he said, as he  
crouched his body, and placed his hand upon the  
tier; for such it was. The iron bedstead had  
been so contrived, by the mechanical art of Lu-  
dovico Sforza, that as the advancing walls came  
in contact with its head and feet, a pressure was



produced on concealed springs, which, when made to play, set in motion a very simple though ingeniously contrived machinery, that effected a transformation. The object was, of course, to heighten in the closing scene of this horrible drama, all the feelings of despair and anguish which the preceding ones had aroused. For the same reason, the last window was so made as to admit only a shadowy kind of gloom rather than light, that the wretched captive might be surrounded as it were, with every seeming preparation for approaching death.

Vivencio seated himself on the bed. Then he knelt and prayed fervently; and sometimes tears would gush from him. The air seemed thick, and he breathed with difficulty, as if he feared that he would faint. From the hot and narrow limits of his dungeon, which were now so diminished that he could neither stand up nor lie down at his full length. But his wasted spirit and oppressed mind no longer struggled within him. He was past hope, and fear shook him no more. Happy if thus revenge had struck its blow; for he would have fallen beneath it almost unconscious of pain. But such a lethargy of the soul, after such an excitement of the passions, had entered into the diabolical calculations of "Polka"; and the tell artifice of his designs had imagined a countering device.

The tolling of an enormous bell struck upon the ears of Vivencio! He started. He beat but once. The sound was so close and stunning, that it seemed to shatter his very brain, while it echoed through the rocky passage like thunder. This was followed by a sudden crash of the roof and walls, as if they were about to fall upon and close around him at once. Vivencio screamed, and instinctively spread forth his arms, as though he had a giant's strength to hold them back. They had moved nearer to him, and were now motionless. Vivencio looked up and saw the roof almost touching his head, even as he sat cowering beneath it; and he felt that a further contraction of a few inches only must commence the frightful operation. Roused as he had been, he now gasped for breath. His body shook violently—he was bent nearly double. His hands were upon either wall, and his feet were drawn under him to avoid the pressure in front.

Thus he remained for more than an hour, when that deafening bell beat again, and there came the crash of horrid death. But the concussion now so great that it struck Vivencio down. As he lay gathered up in lessened bulk, the bell beat loud and frequent—crash succeeded crash—and on, and on came the mysterious engine, till Vivencio's smothered groans were heard no more! He was horribly crushed by the ponderous roof, and collapsed sides—and the flattened bier was his Iron Shroud.

#### OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,  
Washington, March 2, 1843.

Sir: I have the honor to transmit to you the copy of a resolve of the Legislature of Maine, recently addressed to the President by the Executive of that State, relative to certain proceedings of the Government of New Brunswick, supposed to be in contravention of the terms of the treaty of 9th August last, between the United States and Great Britain.

Will you do me the favor to communicate to this Department such information on the subject as you may possess, or may be able hereafter to obtain from the Provincial Government, in explanation of the proceedings referred to?

I avail myself, &c. &c.

DANIEL WEBSTER.

HENRY S. FOX, Esq. &c. &c. &c.

#### STATE OF MAINE.

Resolved in relation to bonds or securities that were to be surrendered by Great Britain to the State of Maine and Massachusetts under the late Treaty.

Resolved, That the Governor be requested to inform the President of the United States that the Government of the Province of New Brunswick are attempting to collect from citizens of this State and others, bonds belonging to the "disputed territory fund," so called, which were given for lumber cut under permits from the States of Maine and Massachusetts, in contravention of the Treaty of Washington; and request the President to remonstrate with the British Minister against said proceeding, and to insist on the stipulation of the treaty, which provides that any bonds or securities appertaining thereto (the disputed territory fund) shall be paid and delivered over to the Government of the United States; and to take such measures relating to the matter as to him may seem fit to cause the treaty stipulations to be carried into effect, that the citizens of this State may be saved any further aggravation from that source.

In the House of Representatives, February 17, 1843. Read and passed.

DAVID DUNN, Speaker.

In Senate, February 17, 1843. Read and passed.

EDW. KAVANAGH, President.

February 17, 1843. Approved.

JOHN FAIRFIELD.

A true copy, Attest:

PHILIP C. JOHNSON, Secretary of State.

WASHINGTON, March 4, 1843.

Sir: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday's date, enclosing certain resolutions recently passed by the Legislature of the State of Maine, with respect to the management of the disputed territory fund.

I am not at present in possession of any information upon the subject to which these resolutions refer: but I shall immediately forward your communication to the Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, and will acquaint you with his Excellency's reply. I shall also transmit the correspondence to her Majesty's Government in England.

With regard to the form of the resolutions themselves, as you make no observation thereupon in your letter, I hope I am justified in believing that you disapprove, equally with myself, of the unbecoming and disrespectful language in which they are drawn up.

I avail myself, &c. &c.

H. S. FOX.

The Hon. DANIEL WEBSTER, &c. &c.

WASHINGTON, March 31, 1843.

Sir: With reference to your letter of the 2d instant, conveying to me certain resolutions passed by the Legislature of the State of Maine, upon the subject of bonds belonging to the disputed territory fund, which letter was referred by me for information to the Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick, I have now to acquaint you that the Lieutenant Governor informs me that, so long ago as October last, upon receiving intelligence from Lord Ashburton of the signature of the Treaty of Washington, he had issued orders to the Attorney General of the Province to suspend all proceedings upon the bonds in question. The Attorney General reports officially that the above orders have been duly obeyed. It appears, therefore, that the resolutions of the Maine Legislature cannot have been grounded upon an accurate statement of facts. I avail myself of this occasion to renew to you the assurance of my distinguished consideration.

H. S. FOX.

The Hon. DANIEL WEBSTER, &c. &c.

DISPUTED TERRITORY FUND.—Upon our first page will be found the recent correspondence between Mr. Webster and Mr. Fox, the British Minister at Washington, called forth by a resolve passed by the Legislature of Maine at its late session, in relation to the alleged continuance of the provincial authorities to enforce the collection of the bonds and securities belonging to the disputed territory, and in contravention of the late treaty.

It will be seen by the second letter, that Mr. Fox, on the authority of the Lt. Governor of New Brunswick, states that since October last all proceedings by the Provincial Government on the bonds in question, have been suspended.

In the first letter, Mr. Fox complains to Mr. Webster of the "unbecoming and disrespectful language" in which the Resolve of our Legislature, is drawn up;—and, because Mr. Webster fails to make the same complaint, he therefore concludes that Mr. Webster equally with himself, disapproves of it in this respect! If the failure of Mr. Webster to complain, is to be taken as a disapproval of the language of the Resolve, certainly, the actual complaint of Mr. Fox must be taken as an approval of it. But be this as it may, we are actually unable to perceive any thing, either in the "form" or the "language" of the Resolves, at which either the British minister or the American Secretary, could reasonably take umbrage. Certain we are, that the Legislature of Maine never dreamt that the language of the Resolve would excite any thing like official disapprobation, foreign or domestic. And we can safely vouch, that in the passage of the Resolve, undiplomatic though it may be in language, no indecorum whatever was intended towards Mr. Webster, the British Minister at Washington, or to "Her Majesty's Government in England," whether it is threatened to be sent. The Legislature only designed to represent to the General Government, for the purpose of alleviation, a grievance under which they believed to be suffering; and this was done in plain, direct, forcible, and perhaps, blunt language. If be not very court-like, we trust those aggrieved at it, can find some little extenuation for its use, originating in the desire to retain unmolested what little the State received under the treaty for territory surrendered up. And, seriously, we think that a State, which has sacrificed so much for the harmony of "two great nations," ought to be indulged in a little latitude of remark; and we hope, that Mr. Fox upon further reflection, (as well as Mr. Webster, should be effected in like manner) will, in view of all these circumstances pardon something to "past services."

We know not upon what facts or information the resolve of the Legislature was predicated; but presume they did not act without sufficient grounds for so doing. Notwithstanding the force of the provincial authorities represent that all interference on their part with the securities referred to has ceased, we are led to entertain a different opinion, from the fact, that they continue to exercise jurisdiction in other respects over the territory yielded up by the treaty, in violation of its stipulations. We refer to the case of Savage, arrested on the territory in question, by the provincial authorities, in reference to which a correspondence has taken place between Mr. Webster and Mr. Fox, to be found in another part of to-day's paper—*Augusta Age*.

A FIGHT IN THE PENNSYLVANIA LEGISLATURE. A MAN STABBED ON THE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE.

HARRISBURG, April 8.

The House of Representatives has been the theatre of a sanguinary and bloody affray. A fight occurred to the right of the Speaker's chair, between Edward McGowan, a member from the county of Philadelphia, and John B. Bratton, editor of the "State Capital Gazette."

The cause of the affray was an offensive article in this morning's Gazette, reflecting on Mr. McGowan.

The Gazette was laid upon the desks of members a little after ten o'clock, and the article above given was shown to Mr. McGowan soon after. About the time the paper was shown to McGowan, Mr. Bratton, the publisher, came into the Hall, and walked to the fire, at the right of the Speaker. As soon as Mr. McGowan saw him he walked to him, pointed out the offensive article and asked if he was the author. Mr. Bratton said he was. Mr. McGowan then spit at him and gave him a blow.

The blow was returned, and after one or two passes, Mr. McGowan stepped back picked up a chair, and struck Mr. B. over the head. Bratton grasped the chair as it hit him, and a short scuffle ensued, when it dropped between them. Bratton stung by the blow, attempted to raise the chair, when McGowan drew a small Spanish dirk, and made towards him. At this time a member sitting near, called out "he has got a knife!" Bratton seeing the knife, and being unable to defend himself, retreated behind the Speaker's chair, and was followed by McGowan, who stabbed him in the shoulder just as they got behind the desk or House Post Office.

As they emerged from the other side into the open hall, Mr. T. J. Miles threw himself between them, and immediately McGowan was seized by

several members. Bratton, went to the dressing room, washed the blood from his face and went to his dwelling in Chestnut street.

On examination, it was found that the dirk had struck the shoulder blade, slightly shattered the bone, and was itself very much bent by the force of the blow. If it had struck two inches lower, it would have taken his life on the spot.

Mr. McGowan was arrested about 12 o'clock, while the House was still in session, he having surrendered himself, and was bound over in bonds of \$1000, by Justice Snyder, to appear at the next Court of Sessions in this county. Mr. Bratton, though not dangerously injured is confined to his bed.

#### OXFORD DEMOCRAT.

PARIS, APRIL 18, 1843.

The great "bought up" "personal identity" sneeringly said a short time since, that Van Buren's prospects were somewhat dimmed because the "Clarion" said he (Van Buren) was not his first choice. The Clarion is so reckless as to say that he shall express his candid opinion on this point in spite of the intimidation or ridicule of some would be leaders. Have a care, Mr. Clarion, how you talk when you are in the vicinity of explosives.

We would take occasion to say that Mr. Van Buren, although we have an exalted view of him as a Statesman and Patriot, is not our first choice for President. This may dim his prospects still more in the estimation of some folks. Wonder if that caucus at Augustus dimmed his prospects any? In towns it is often said that if such a man takes sides on a question, or comes out in favor of any particular candidate, that candidate, or question, is sure to be defeated. We look upon Van Buren's prospects in this light, after knowing the opinion of certain would-be-leaders.

The right way to support a Newspaper.—The following remarks are from the Portland American. "They are the truth—the whole truth and nothing but the truth." Words fitly spoken, are like apples of gold and pictures of silver. These are just such words. They may be applied to other business as well as that of an Editor.

"Much depends upon the supporters of a newspaper whether it is conducted with spirit and interest—if they are neglected in their payment, the pride and ambition of the editor is broken down—he works at a thankless and unprofitable task—becomes discouraged and careless—his paper loses its pith and interest and dies. But on the contrary, if subscribers are of the right sort, if they are punctual liberal hearted fellows, always in advance on the subscription list, taking an interest in increasing the number of his subscribers, now and then speaking a good word for his paper; cheering him on his course by smiles of approbation; with such subscribers as these, I would forewear comfort, ease leisure, everything that could possibly step between me and the gratification of every honorable desire of a newspaper do, to make it interesting and respectable—indeed, without concurring efforts on their part, the editor of a paper will not, cannot bestow the attention which is necessary to make it what it should be.—*Amos*."

City Government of Portland.—The city government is Whig. By a coalition of Democrats, Whigs and temperance men, this result was effected. This being the case the Advertiser has been complaining because some Democrats have received some appointments to office; and undertakes to find fault with the authorities for having deserted their friends. The secret of this complaining is all exposed in the fact that the Advertiser did not receive the City printing. The American makes the following remarks among others which are worthy attention, not only on this but on other occasions.

"We have no interest in this matter. We never entered into any of these coalitions ourselves and never expect to. We always think it best to go the straight democratic ticket. But though the usage is one we revere and follow, yet we have no anathemas for those who on minor questions deem it their duty to coalesce. Conscience is above party. The doctrine of regular nominations is important to the success of our principles—but it is not an iron chain to bind down the souls, and bodies, and wills of freemen. If Democrats on mere local matters, choose to disagree, let the expressed voice of the party in caucus, we are sorry for it, but have no gullotine for their heads. But if they turn traitors to democracy, as did F. O. J. Smith, et al, none, we then can have no political fellowship with them."

We cut the following from the *Waldo Signal* (Whig) It gives a Biography of the only Whig member in the Senate last winter. This accounts for his dismission from the Senate so soon after it had convened.

MORE BIOGRAPHY OF MAINE SENATORS.—The following incident, from a Boston paper, was omitted in the glowing accounts of the Senate of Maine which has lately appeared before the people. Mr. Smart, you should be more particular when engaged in writing the lives, heights, depth, breadth and circumference of the *reputation of the State*.

It is said that a Senator in Maine, on arriving at Augusta, by mistake went to the arsenal instead of the State House, and on demanding his seat, was required to sign the books of the establishment, when he found himself enlisted in the army for seven years."

Religious Meeting.—A religious meeting was held at this place during most of the time last week. A correspondent, who attended, says,—"It was one of great interest—and of deep religious feeling. Many made a public profession and expressed a determination to follow the precepts and believe and lay hold of the promises of a Saviour."

The Portland American says:—"The Oxford Democrat thinks that 'Brother Kingsbury is likely to be a believer' in Mesmerism. Well, why not, if it should increase the molasses trade? Besides it would be a capital electioneering agent. We could catch the whigs as they are going to the polls, look them in the eye and manipulate them a bit, and then will them to vote the democratic ticket. Don't you see, my dear boy?"

Ah, yes, we see it all now. A pious man truly, to set the coons a napping, 'A settin' on a rail!'

When a man stops his weekly newspaper on account of pecuniary forebodings, we consider him about as gone a case as if he should conclude to stop his daily bread, for fear he should come to poverty. In either event, he must starve to death in order to live independently.

#### CONNECTICUT ELECTION.

##### THE TRIUMPH RENDERED CERTAIN!

The Boston Post of Saturday contains returns from all the towns in the state but three, which show a majority for Gov. Cleveland over all others of two hundred and fifty-five. As the three towns not heard from—Sheridan, Warren, and Union—last year gave 76 majority for the democratic ticket, there can be no doubt of Mr. Cleveland's election by the people.

Last year the majority against Cleveland was 125. The Hartford Times gives the names of the representatives elected in 134 towns—99 are democrats, and 74 federalists—democratic majority 25.

Sixteen democrats and five federalists are elected to the Senate.

The democratic candidates for Congress are elected in all the Districts—a gain of four members! The names of the successful candidates are Thomas H. Seymour, John Stewart, George S. Catlin, Samuel Simons.

New York Election! Democracy Triumphant!!—The Election in the city of New York has resulted in the choice of Robert H. Morris, the democratic candidate for the Mayoralty, by a majority of near 6000! The Democrats have a decided majority in both branches of the common Council. Morris' maj. in the city, 5765.

The democratic majority is larger than it has been before for many years.

Albany Election.—The municipal election, took place in Albany on Tuesday. Mr. Humphrey, the whig candidate, was elected mayor by 205 majority. The whig majority in the city at the last November election was 553. The whigs at that time carried six of the ten wards; now they carry but five.

Hudson Election.—In the city of Hudson, N. Y., the democrats have elected their candidate for mayor by 25 majority.

Brooklyn.—The democrats have elected their Mayor by a majority of about 200. The whigs have a majority in the Common Council.

Munroe Edwards. This notorious forger attempted to make his escape from Sing Sing prison, New York, a short time since. He concealed himself in a drawer or box, having some crackers and cigars with him—enough it was thought to hold out several days. The following was the result of the attempt:—

MUNROE EDWARDS.—The day after the great financier was hauled out of the "box," in which he had ensconced himself, was tied to a whipping post and received some fifty lashes on the bare back with a cat o' nine tails laid on with much emphasis by one of the stouthead keepers.

We perceive that some of our contemporaries are making merry over this; but we cannot sympathize with them. It is not only an unmanly punishment; but brutal. What good will that whipping do Edwards? Will it prevent his making another effort to escape? Will it make a better man of him?

With this number we send our subscriber the public laws passed at the last session of the Legislature, printed on an extra sheet.

WHAT DEMOCRATS SHOULD REMEMBER.—Every Democrat, says the New York Plebeian, should remember that his principles properly understood, must always be those of the great mass of mankind, and that while the friends of equal rights are true to themselves they can never be defeated. What those who live by governing the people lack in numbers, they make up in strategy, and by their maxims, the maxims of all tyrants, "divide and conquer," a minority too often prevails over a majority.

The cause of popular rights has always advanced hand in hand with that of popular intelligence. With a fair issue and a united party, we can never be defeated. Disunion, is therefore treachery; and all else, that we have to fear, is that people should mistake hard cider for solid arguments, and log cabins for popular principles.

Movements of Daniel Webster. The New York Herald of Wednesday says that Mr. Webster arrived in Philadelphia last Monday, and was expected there in a day or two.

It is generally surmised that Mr. Webster will not return to Washington, having signified his intention to resign the State Department next month. He will probably make up his mind in New York.

Tribute to Mackenzie.—It is said that several ladies and gentlemen of Baltimore have in contemplation to present to Commander Mackenzie, of the U. S. Navy, a pair of gold epaulettes, as a tribute of respect for his firmness and ability as an officer, and his character as a man.

New Paper.—A new paper has been established in Bangor, called the *Mercury*. It is neutral in politics and religion. We have not seen it, but it is extolled by some of the brethren of the quill.

COM. MACKENZIE ACQUITTED.—On the several charges, 1st, Of murder on the high seas, on board of a U. S. vessel, 2d, Of oppression, 3d, Of illegal punishment, together with the specifications thereunder, the finding of the Court was "not proved."

Under the 4th charge, of conduct unbecoming an officer, which was waived by the Judge Advocate, the Court took no action.

Under the 5th charge, of cruelty and oppression, the specification, viz:—In that he habitually inflicted cruel and unnecessary punishment upon his crew, was waived by the Judge Advocate, as being too vague. "As far as evidence was offered under the 6th charge, the Court do find no proof of mistreatment of the crew of the Somers generally by Com. Mackenzie, nor of individual mistreatment, and therefore find it not proved."

"The Court do therefore HONORABLY acquit Commander ALEXANDER S. MACKENZIE of all the charges and specifications preferred against him by the Secretary of the navy."

The finding of the Court has been approved by the President.

Kentucky.—Col. R. M. Johnson is a candidate for congress, in opposition to Hon. Garrett Davis in the Lexington district.

#### For the Democrat.

"Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it."

If it were proper, I should like to preach a sermon from this text; but it is not proper, I therefore only give an exhortation. Solomon never would have said "train up a child in the way he should go," if it had been impossible to do so. A man of wisdom never would have uttered a deliberate opinion on any subject, and especially one so important as that of family government, unless it had been susceptible of practical demonstration.

In looking about me at times as I pass the streets or enter the house of worship, I have often doubted the practicability of this precept. For instead of seeing the young behave as if they were trained in the way they should go, they act as if they were not trained at all. Many of them, not all, are insensible of their duties as children. They are noisy in the streets—noisy at meeting—noisy at singing school—noisy at every place you find them. At meeting they are constantly whispering—changing position—laughing—playing, or shuffling the leaves of a book, &c. If they are called upon to be still, they pay no attention to it; and it is nothing very strange to see some of them do the worse for a slight rebuke and a kind request to behave better.

Children suffered to grow up in this manner with these bad habits, and many others which might be named, will not, even at later and riper years, forget them; nor even when they are old depart from them. In this manner they are made insubordinate citizens, faithless companions, dishonest, ignorant, unworthy and unprofitable.

There must be a reform in this matter. Family government must be restored—must be held sacred. Parents must be obeyed. They must grasp the reins of household government and cause all minors to submit to every virtuous and wholesome exercise of authority. No misdeeds and acts of insubordination should go unrebuked or unpunished. It is love and mercy to punish a child for vicious conduct, when it is known that a persistence in such conduct would lead to the destruction of all correct morality. "Spare the rod and spoil the child," is not the best way. Too much whipping is as bad as too little. Both these extremes are to be avoided. I do not approve of corporal punishment and am perfectly convinced that it would be necessary in no case, if the child had been properly dealt by at all times. But children are not so dealt by, and therefore it sometimes becomes necessary not to "spare the rod." At any rate there should be family government. Come what may, there should be parental authority. Authority that would direct the child to courses of honesty, sobriety, politeness, obedience and kindness, while at the same time it forced him to abandon everything of an opposite tendency.

The safety of our great fabric of freedom depends entirely on the virtue and intelligence of the people. The children now coming up will shortly be the people. They are already the people in embryo. From this fact how extremely important and necessary it is that parents and guardians should "Train up their children in the way they should go that when they are old they may not depart from it."

#### A LOVER OF ORDER.

Singing in Common Schools.—The School committee of Portland, speaking of the introduction of singing into the schools of that city, say:—

"The recent examination, has shown that the scholars may devote sufficient attention to the study of Music, to enable them to sing with propriety and effect, without detriment to their other studies. Indeed, where they excelled in Music they generally manifested the greatest proficiency in other exercises, particularly in reading. It is the concurrent testimony of many of the Teachers, and others who have considered the subject, that the exercise of Singing is an efficient auxiliary to Reading; and that by strengthening and modulating the tones of the voice, Singing gives beauty and effect to that rare accomplishment, good Reading."

THE ASYLUM JOURNAL, published, printed, and edited by the crazy men of the Vermont Lunatic Asylum, gives the following:—

Miller's Prophecy Fulfilled.—A person proclaiming himself to be the Messiah, and now making his second appearance among men, was brought to this institution a few days since, bound hand and foot, and accompanied by three stout Pharisic looking fellows. As a proof of his authority, he mentions that during his first advent, the people said—"He hath a devil, and is mad," and now they say the same and have put him into an insane asylum. He declares Miller to be correct in predicting his second coming at this time, but that he is incorrect in predicting the destruction of the world by fire at present. He proclaims that he is going to judge all according to the deeds done in the body, and will take the saints with him into glory; but leave the rest to their own destruction. It must be some consolation to him to be surrounded by so many of his followers, for fourteen were already here, having been so persecuted by their friends as to be placed in a lunatic asylum, under the pretence of insanity.

The Boundary Treaty.—The New York Journal of Commerce says it is happy to announce that evidence of an important and conclusive character in regard to the views of the commissioners who negotiated the Treaty of 1783, on the subject of the North Eastern Boundary, has recently been discovered, and will soon be made known to the public. At present we are only at liberty to say, that it fully sustains the American claim.

Walter A. Bryant, Esq. the editor of the *Barre Gazette*, at the recent town meeting in Barre was appointed to the office of first field driver for the first ward, and in his last paper returns thanks for the honor done him as follows:—

"We acknowledge the compliment paid to us by the promotion from the hind-captaincy to the captain-generalship of the board. It shows that the experience of those who have elected us has led them to appreciate our ability to drive swine and such."







